

Lifelines

Janet K. Wallace

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Summary

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Description:

After Cleyra is obliterated by an extraordinary force unleashed by Alexandria, Quina wakes up to find a desolate place and helps Sir Fratley search for the remaining survivors.

1. Lifelines

A/N: This fic was written as a challenge for the Final Fantasy IX Writers Guild. I did my best to replicate Quina's speech in my style. To the people who have always been reading my works, and those who are beginning in 2025, I wish everyone a nice day!

The world is on fire.

Air is dry, smoke too thick, I no like it. Sand not yummy. A world without a taste means nothing.

I see no people. I see no town, I see no mushrooms, I see no one I know. Everyone is gone. How sad... Then I hear noise under rock. Someone is there! Is it frog? But I saw no frog before. It not sounds like frog. Too small to be frog. A child? Not going to eat child. Not tasty, kind of wrong.

— Dear Reis, the people... — I hear voice. It's sad voice. It smells like... Blood!? Will not eat.

— Who are you? — I asked.

— OOOooohh... — No answer. He too hurt to talk.

— I help you. — I said, rock too heavy to throw around.

I no eat rocks. Nevermind, I push rock, I save his life! Zidane would do that. I look at his face. I saw it before, I think. A Burmecian, like Freya. Where Freya? He not Freya. Does he have food? No matter, Zidane would not ask for food, or anything like that.

— Thanks. — He said.

— Who are you? — I asked again. He looks familiar.

— I... My name... I can't remember...

— You no Freya! You Sir Fratley. You jest!

— Fratley? Yes, that's who I am, but what about Freya? Where is she?

— Now you care!? — I said, very angry. Now I remember who he is. — Freya love you but you no love her in return. You so rude! Freya much nicer.

— What?

— I no fool. You say you no remember Freya, you leave her alone, she cries. That is bad. You bad.

— I see. — Said Fratley, standing up. — I have my own share of mistakes, but we don't have time to discuss such trivial matters when my people need help.

— I agree, but you still a jest. — I said, looking for people. There are no yummy-yummies, which is sad.

A while later, and still no sign of people. Or yummy-yummies. This is bad. Really bad.

— That thing... It came from the skies. — I hear Fratley say something.

— What thing? — I so confused. He too confused. — You mean bright thing?

— You saw it too?

— I did. Freya jumped on portal. Zidane and Vivi jumped on portal too, but I did not. I afraid of heights. I stay, ground shake, air gets hot and I see it... Bright thing falling from the sky, everyone running around and I looking for food. I found none.

I so angry! I so sad too. Bright thing approaches and it causes huge explosion. A huge BOOM! Too loud for my ears, I fall and hit head. I wake up and look fine, but fire everywhere. Everything burns and screams.

— An eidolon did this. — Fratley walks around, still looking for people. He is a jest, but he also brave. — A single eidolon was responsible for all this tragedy. I never thought Alexandria would... How could they?... It was my duty to prevent this.

— Your duty?

— The reason I left Burmecia behind was to keep it safe from an imminent war against Alexandria. A war like no other, according to the rumors I heard about the production and shipment of new weapons. That's all I can remember after I found myself waking up in a forest. As it seems, I have failed my mission, and my people have paid the price of my failure.

— You no remember Freya?

— I'm afraid I don't. My memories are foggy, but I do remember being a knight.

— How convenient. — I said, feeling pity for Fratley.

— The people, they were inside the cathedral. I led them inside the cathedral, I thought they'd be safe in there. Am I worthy of my knighthood if a single mistake has resulted in so many deaths?

— We will find out. — I looked at Fratley and he looked at me. — I so sure there are people in here. I saw lots of people before, they did not go anywhere else.

— You're right. There might be survivors buried under the wreckage. Let's hurry!

How much time has passed since we began searching for people? I have no idea.

I found no people. No yummy-yummies. Fratley found nothing, but we try our best. The stench is unbearable! It is disgusting, but I have to do this. No one else can.

Where is cathedral? What a mess. I keep searching for people, but I find no one. I only found Fratley so far. I still hate him, but he is a good knight. As good as Freya? Doubtful, but he is doing something, at least. We search and search, and still no sign of people. No Cleyrans, no Burmecians... It

is like no one ever existed, how awful. I remember Cleyran dancers, I ask them for yummy-yummies and they walk away. Where are they? I miss them. I hope they are okay.

— This place too big! We will never find them.
— I shouted.

— Giving up won't do much. — Fratley said. — If we are still alive despite it being impossible, then so are the others, and I won't let them down. Not this time.

I think about Fratley's words. I think about his people. They may die if I do nothing. I no want anyone to die, so I will find them. I cook for them, I promise. What is that? A hand under a rock? I hope there is someone there, not just a hand. The hand is moving, I hear breathing...

— I found someone! I so happy! — I said, pulling a rock.

It was a heavy rock, too heavy for me, but Fratley offered some help and we did it. We found a survivor, it looks like a woman. Not a dancer, but a refugee from Burmecia. Lots of Burmecians were here. War took place in their country, it also took place in here.

— I can heal her with my remaining power. —
Fratley casts a spell that makes green light surrounds
his and the woman's body.

— How is she?

— Her arm is broken, but she will be fine.

Time passes. And yet, we are far from relieved.

The more people we find, the more stressful it
becomes. Every time I find a survivor, Fratley heals
them. It is wonderful, but he seems tired. We tired.
Only two of us to help a crowd. So many people, so
much work to do. I look at desert, there is no life. Or
is there?

— I see no monster. — I said, with a fork in
hand. — If monster comes in, I stab it! They no hurt
people!

— The monsters have already hurt our people. —
Said Fratley, holding a child. — People who had
nothing to do with any of this.

He is no happy. Angry, maybe, but he is also sad.
He is very bitter, like he wants to say a forbidden
word, but he no do it because he is a knight. I think I

know why he is like this... The child he has in arms make no sound.

— My son... — A wounded soldier approaches. Fratley wants to say something, but it is hard for words to come out.

— I'm sorry. Even with my power, I can't resurrect those who have departed. It's a shame, he was so young.

Why is everything complicated? Why do people get hurt? I no like it. I so hungry.

This place used to be a big tree.

Is this a tree? It looks like no tree. When tree burns, it stops being tree. It changes to ashes. It is no longer beautiful. The sun goes down and I hear painful moaning. I hear cries, I hear suffering, I hear people helping each other as I close my eyes and... No yummy-yummies, my stomach growls.

— My last strength... That should do it. — Fratley said weakly. On his knees, I hear him pray for a deity before aiming his javelin high. His entire body turns bright like a shining star before he shoots many spears into the sky.

What a spectacle, very wonderful, and then he faints.

— Are you okay? — I said.

— Damn... I wish I was more useful... — I hear Fratley say something. — But I can't even heal a child.

— I understand pain. I no like it, but I know it.

— The rescue is coming for us, that I'm sure of. These people will be safe, there will be no more deaths. Thank you... So much... I... So sorry for not knowing who Freya is... If only I had the chance to find her again... Then I...

He no dead, but his eyes close like the ones belonging to the dead.

We have been through a lot today. Fratley and I rescued so many people, but the few losses still hurt. They hurt forever. Before my eyes closed, the last sound I heard was loud, it came from above. The last thing I saw was an airship landing.

We did our work. I so happy. I so tired.

Days later. A lot happened.

I live! But a lot of people die.

I so sad, but I not so sad all the time. It is right to feel sad, but not always.

Zidane found me in Qu's Marsh. He and friends thought I perished in Cleyra. I said I no dead, but I forgot to tell the whole story, going from here to there and this place and that place so quickly that I got no time to tell anything.

It was a long journey before it came to an end. I went to all sorts of places and I ate all sorts of food along the way. I met a lot of people from other continents and distant worlds. I had the chance to experience yummy-yummies from another planet! They no tasty, but they different and edible too.

I never forget good food and good recipes. While the others looked for Kuja, I learned cooking skills, but sometimes I helped my friends too. I forgot when, maybe riding an airship, but I tell Freya about Fratley. I had to. I say he is doing fine, he is a jerk for abandoning her but also a hero for lending a hand to his people. Freya says that she is glad that Fratley is alive, but also that she is focused on her mission to find Kuja. Because of him, Cleyra got

destroyed. I will never forgive him for that! For ruining my search of yummy-yummies and for hurting people!

I will never know what Kuja tastes like. He too powerful to be defeated, he wanted to kill everything and I had better food in mind.

Back in Alexandria, I became head cook again. So many things happened but I no care that much. Something happened with Kuja, Zidane is missing but he is back, Eiko got a family, Steiner got a girlfriend but I no care for girlfriends really. I make good food, that is what I do and what really matters. I serve good meal, my cooking skills help a lot. I see people from around the world working on kitchen. I serve all kinds of people, everyone deserves food made with heart.

I miss Vivi. I say I no care for a lot of stuff other than food, but I cared for him. Vivi no irrelevant, I miss him so much. I make breakfast for his kids, which makes me happy.

— Excuse me. Are you Chef Quina? — I see a familiar face. A Burmecian lady... I swear I saw her before.

— Yes. — I nodded.

— I am Irma. You saved me and countless other lives at Cleyra. I'm very grateful.

— You're welcome! — I cried. I so happy.

— Without your aid... I don't know where I would be. I owe you my life.

— And you owe me money.

— What?

— You pay for food!

— Oh, but of course! I'll pay as much as you want.

— And your arm?

— It's still healing.

I think about that day, how awful it was, but how great it is to know that Irma is alright. And, best of all, I got a new client.

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